

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-11 (canceled).

Claim 12 (presently amended): A system for monitoring and transmitting utility status via a universal communications interface, comprising:

an input interface operative to receive a utility status signal from a utility meter;

a processor functionally coupled to the input interface for receiving the utility status signal from the input interface and operative to generate a status message based on the utility status signal;

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a universal communications interface, local to the utility meter, functionally coupled to the processor and configurable for communicating with a plurality of different types of communication devices, each different type of communication device operative to communicate with a receiving device via one of a plurality of different communication mediums;

a slot functionally coupled to the universal communications interface and configured to interchangeably connect one of the plurality of different types of communication devices;

wherein the processor communicates with the universal communications interface to determine which one of the plurality of different types of communication devices is connected to the slot; and

wherein the processor formats the status message into a format compatible with the connected communication device and transmits the formatted status message to the universal communications interface for transmission to the connected communications device.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the plurality of different communication mediums are selected from the group consisting of radio frequency waves, telephone lines, cable lines, fiber optic lines, satellite links, and power lines.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the utility status signal comprises an analog wave form; and

wherein the input interface comprises an analog-to-digital converter operative to convert the analog wave form into a digital signal representing a utility status.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the utility status signal is received from a connect/disconnect monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 16 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the utility status signal is received from a tamper detection monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the utility status signal is received from a voltage monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the utility status signal is received from a current monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, wherein the utility status signal is received from an outage notification monitor of the utility meter.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The system of claim 12, further comprising a memory storage functionally coupled to the processor for storing computer-executable instructions executed by the processor; and

wherein said computer-executable instructions cause the processor to determine whether the utility status signal exceeds a threshold value and, if so, to generate the status message.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The system of claim 20, wherein the memory storage further stores data relating to signal formats compatible with each of the plurality of different types of communication devices.